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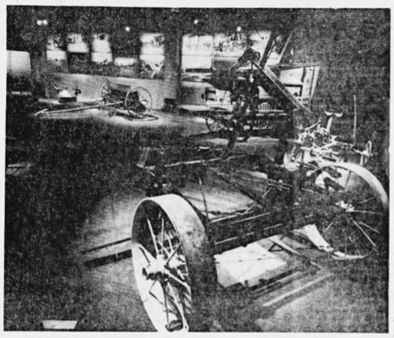

Early farming machinery fills a 'development of land' exhibit at the Glenbow Centre in Calgary.

Complete history of the West on display at Glenbow Centre

By JAMIE PORTMAN
Southam News Services

CALGARY — In the words of Hugh Faulkner, Canada's retiring secretary of state, people were in for an "extraordinary surprise."

Faulkner was talking about Calgary's new $8.5 million Glenbow Centre — an art and museum complex of incredible richness, diversity and originality.

The former state secretary — who was recently transferred to the science and technology portfolio — was in Calgary to participate in the opening of the Glenbow Centre. Ottawa contributed $1.6 million towards the project, and after touring the centre, Faulkner admitted that he was knocked out by the experience.

That's the effect that the Glenbow has been having on everyone since Premier Peter Lougheed officially declared it open on September 22.

Officials say there's not another institution like it in Canada. The eight-storey, 250,000-square-foot centre houses:

— An estimated one million artifacts, ranging from antique cars and turn-of-the-century teapots to Indian arrowheads and old-fashioned can-openers;

— Some 26,000 pieces of art, including the finest of all collections of Western Canadian art available anywhere;

— A unique library and archives, containing 210 tons of books, historical documents and other precious materials.

Exhibition space accounts for 100,000 square feet of the centre and can accommodate up to 3,000 people per hour.

At the core of the Glenbow philosophy is the preservation of Western Canada's history. Gallery and museum visitors will therefore be exposed to a remarkable panorama of artifacts, painting and sculptures covering every facet of Western Canada's story, be it the Seventeenth Century fur trade or the oil boom of the Twentieth Century. The events leading up to the opening of the centre are as fascinating as the centre itself.

Glenbow began in 1954 as the name of a foundation established by Eric L. Harvie, QC, a Calgary lawyer who had made a fortune in the oil industry. In the years that followed, the foundation accumulated a vast collection of art and artifacts, as well as documents, records and manuscripts.

Although there was special emphasis on Western Canada's early settlers and their native predecessors, the foundation also acquired items from North and South America, Europe, Africa and the Orient.

Ten years ago, Harvie donated the shares of the foundation and all its assets to the province of Alberta along with a $5 million cheque. The province responded with a further $5 million endowment, and under the terms of this joint venture between Eric Harvie and the government, the foundation was renamed the Glenbow-Alberta Institute. The non-profit body has as its main aim the collecting of "an assortment" of Western Canadian artifacts.

The new downtown building is part of a new convention centre and hotel complex. It marks the first time in Glenbow's history that its various departments have been under one roof.

The Alberta government owns the structure and rents it to the Glenbow-Alberta Institute for $1 a year. The federal government contributed $1.6 million to help consolidate the collection. The city of Calgary is underwriting all maintenance costs.

There are two basic exhibition programs-museum and gallery. The museum shows the history of Western Canada. The gallery will feature the Glenbow's own extensive collections relating to Western Canadian history, but will also regularly bring in travelling exhibitions.

For the opening, the centre is showing the two most lavish exhibitions in its history — one offering an historical overview of Canadian art, the other a contemporary view of Western Canadian art. The displays feature 300 works by 140 artists and are drawn from more than 50 private and public collections from across Canada.

The exhibition areas are built around a central stairwell core. The orientation point is the new, $250,000 "Aurora Borealis" sculpture which thrusts upwards from the orientation gallery to the fourth floor. The sculpture is the work of James Houston, the prominent Canadian novelist, artist and authority on Eskimo art.

All style, no content plagues recitalists here this weekend

Music

By Jacob Siskind

There was a small audience at the Salle Claude Champagne on Saturday evening. Montrealers have short memories!

The event was a joint recital given by two former winners of the Montreal International Competition — Ruben Agaronian, the violinist who won first prize at the contest in 1972, and Makvala Kasrashvili, the soprano who came second the following year.

The big problem was the ineptitude of the people who organized the event. They began by billing it as a performance by Stars of the Bolshoi, which was so misleading it put off many potential concert goers. They then failed to publicize the event adequately and even could not get the spelling of the artists' names consistent in the fliers they were handing out.

The impresario is obviously new to the business and he will have to pay as he learns, as he has already undoubtely found out. I hope that the artists do not have to pay too, because they have been presented in a manner that may do harm to their potential careers.

As the cherry on this smogasbord of fox passes, both performers were encouraged to present programs one might have accepted in Natashquan or Deception Bay in the days before radio and satellite communication, but which would hardly be acceptable in a small town, let alone a village, today.

Not even Kreisler, Elman or Sarasate, not to mention Melba or Chaliapine, would have dared to offer an evening devoted entirely to saccharine encore pieces and minor works by minor composers.

Agaronian is a spectacular violinist. His left hand moves with the speed of light and with the accuracy of a laser beam.

His right arm seems to be an incredible melding of rubber and steel. There is nothing on the violin that he cannot do — and on Saturday night there wasn't one violinistic trick that he did not display with a facility that was little short of fiendish.

You name it — he can do it. It is the sort of control and mastery that makes people like Ricci and Prihoda sound like students in comparison. After the first half of the recital people on all sides were whispering "He's a carbon copy of Heifetz."

It is true that Agaronian does affect some of the Heifetz mannerisms and seems even more at ease than that master on the violin. But more important, he plays everything with a conviction that makes you realize that this is no mere carbon copy. That would be meaningless and uninteresting. He delights in what he is doing and gives his audiences a comparable delight as they listen in awe.

However, there is such a thing as too much of a mochness. There Agaronian overstepped the limits.

Those who heard him play at the violin competition here in 1972 know that he can play other music and play it well. However, memories are short and if he returns to play this kind of recital program he gave here Saturday he will have put himself into the circus act category and will end up playing stupendously in gypsy tea rooms.

Please, Agaronian, for your sake and ours, some real music next time. We accept that you can play the violin as can few others in our time. Now let us know again that you have some serious ideas about music as well.

As for Kasrashvili, she too chose a program of short pieces, few of which required more than a sense of color and a charming stage presence. These she has in abundance. Now, if a sensible impresario can convince her to wrap her glorious sound around some notes that demand musicianship, a sense of line, a feeling of development, we will all be the better for it.

The audience on Saturday evening was made up largely of members of the local Armenian community. They had very good reason to be proud of the accomplishments of both performers. However, if either artist ever hopes to appeal to a larger audience, a different kind of program will have to be presented.

Three Spanish dances by Sarasate and three three-minute arias by Puccini do not constitute the core of a musical program. Not on this continent, anyway.

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Earlier in the day, the Musica Camerata ensemble opened its seventh season with a program of music by Mozart, Beethoven, Alexis Contant and Dvorak. As always, the music on the program was one of the principal points of interest in the event.

The three Mozart Church Sonatas for organ and strings that were offered were played with great gusto and charm by all concerned and the few clinkers in the cadenza of the last could have offended no one.

An early Beethoven Quartet for piano and strings, composed at the age of 15, was particularly interesting because the composer used some of the thematic material again later. It would have been even more gratifying had the ensemble also played the mature versions of the same music for direct comparison.

Alexis Contant's Trio No. 1 proved to be a thoroughly commendable piece of writing, in the style of the period and well worked out. It seemed a bit on the longish side, even in juxtaposition with unformed music by Beethoven.

The concert closed with the Dvorak double bass quintet, Op. 77, which was given a rather indifferent performance.

The concert attracted a large, informed and enthusiastic audience, which was added evidence of the importance of these weekend chamber music concerts. Long may they thrive!

Fine Feliciano music hidden by layers of showbiz antics

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

Where was Jose Feliciano, the deft guitarist, at last night's concert at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier? He was buried beneath a dreadfully predictable vocal style (or non-style), audience participation songs, and even impression routines.

Feliciano, who can get a strength and tone from a Spanish guitar that few in any field can match, has stuck to showbiz ever since his huge hit rendering of the Doors' *Light My Fire*. Now he gives almost all of his repertoire a sleepy pseudo Latin-jazz treatment and at times the results are downright ridiculous.

There was a rendering of Dylan's *Knocking On Heaven's Door* and Jose could be counted on for enough "Whoa whoa can't you hear me knockin's" so that a death dirge sounded like a picnic.

When he stepped into *It's Alright Now*, the popular hit parade rock number, his band seemed ready for a rock 'n' roll challenge but Feliciano's tinny nasal languor quashed any chance of that.

And then — could this be the funky *Lady Marmalade* (the Labelle hit) that Jose was stuttering out on electric guitar? He took the rhythm and soul out of the tune and made it into a quasi-hootenanny song, which is enough to give any funk fan the blues.

Surprise reunion sparks overlong singin' concert

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

As advertised, Friday night's folk music extravaganza at McGill's Pollack Hall was a "Good Night for Pickin' and Singin'" — but it was also a very long show that did not provide the best spotlight for artists worthy of the attention.

Instead, the latest reunion of ourtown's near legendary Mountain City Four (which with the surprise addition of Kate and Anna McGarrigle swelled to a sextet), was bunched between the likes of the White River Bluegrass Band, David Rea, Penny Lang, Erik Frandsen and U. Utah Phillips.

Each of these performers has his own attributes, but there were just too many of them on one show — particularly since the acoustics in Pollack Hall are not the most comfortable for home-made music of this sort anyway.

By the time the Mountain City crew arrived — three hours after the concert's scheduled start — the audience (minus a couple of dozen who had left) was ready for their fine harmonies, and accorded the group cheers and a standing ovation.

The McGarrigles were joined by Peter Weldon, Chaim Tannenbau., Ron Doleman and Dane Lanken, all singin and pickin' not with a sense of cant, as can be the case in urban "folk" get-togeth'rs, but with a quality far more spiritual than that. They make their songs — such as *Titanic*, *Port Arthur Stomp*, *Farther Along*, *A la claire fontaine*, a fine variety — come alive as living, unfolding experiences.

Perhaps one day, the Mountain City Four will be accorded a stage — not in a student ghetto or on a multi-performer bill — that will do justice to their unique talents.

The others did the expected, some of which was fine, particularly the White River Bluegrass Band, this city's only bluegrass group to make its living from music.

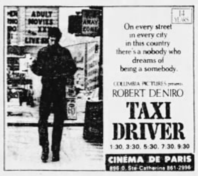
This group performs with a wink in one eye and the other attuned to the arcane harmonies of real country bluegrass (not the Nashville stuff). They aren't sanctimonious about it either, because the songs have plenty of spicy themes relating to today's high living.

Penny Lang, often referred to as the queen of the Montreal folk scene, was considerably more strained in her performance, despite the superb piano accompaniments of Ken Pearson (the same of Janis Joplin's Full-Tilt Band).

Lang conveyed a genuine sense of sincerity and polish in her delivery, perhaps too much so. Her voice is not as powerfully suited to some of the more rousing songs she sings, although she finally got the audience singing in her finale, *I'll Fly Away*.

David Rea is a huffy-puffy blues-folk performer who should concentrate more on guitar playing nuances — he's one of the best studio musicians anywhere — instead of the frantic strumming style he deems necessary to support his non-voice.

Frandsen and Phillips both have their folksy charms — the former with a pleasantly archaic guitar style and the latter with a carney story-telling approach.



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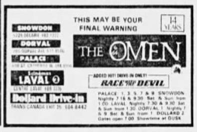

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